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COMMENTS ON ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION OF SUMATRA AND JAVA

Sumatra's racial composition has been perhaps the least influenced by influx of other population groups. The basic native composition of Sumatra's population includes major ethnic groups classified by anthropologists as Coastal Malay, Minangkabau, Batak, Atjehnese, the Redjang-Lampung group, and Niasane, in addition to numerous minor groups. Numbers and significant characteristics of these groups are shown on the attached table.

The native racial composition of Java, comprising Javanese, Sundaese, and Madurese, forms by far the largest, numerically, of the groups being considered here, but it has been more strongly influenced than Sumatra's by outside population groups as a result of more far reaching economic development by the Dutch during the colonial period and by a more active and influential Chinese merchant and commercial class.

Appraisal of popular feeling in Sumatra toward Java as compared with that toward Malaya is difficult. Javanese and Sundaese immigrants to Sumatra, as a result of the Government's transmigration program and of recruitment for work on rubber and tobacco estates, have had difficulty in adjusting to the Sumatran environment -- both physical and cultural. Reports of open hostility between Bataks and Javanese in northeast Sumatra, for example, suggest antagonism between the two cultures. Most sources indicate strong distrust and suspicion on the part of the major ethnic groups in the interior of Sumatra toward all outsiders. Feelings of loyalty to a Java-based central government are not strong. On the other hand, ethnic Malays occupying major areas on Sumatra's east coast have historically had fairly close contacts with the Malay Peninsula and may be considered to provide a cultural tie between the two areas.

Except for Javanese immigrants in South Sumatra and in the vicinity of Medan, the population of Sumatra probably has as strong or possibly even stronger ethnic, linguistic, religious, and economic ties with Malaya than it has had with Java.

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